

FORE! PLAY
ICT launches
golf challenge
Pages 12&13



'Tube' spends £8m

Extra-long Neoplans may form biggest single-route order ever

PLUS - IN THIS ISSUE...



◀ **New products from
MAN - pages 6&7**

**Guided vehicles set for
Vegas - pages 8&9** ▶



Excellent Selection of Used Vehicles, Available Now



DAF

1992 DAF SB2300 VANHOOL ALIZEE, ZF 6 speed splitter gearbox, 53 seats, centre continental door, power door, radio/pa/cassette
1990 DAF SB2300 JONCKHEERE DEAUVILLE ZF 6 speed gearbox, 51 seats, double glazed, continental door, toilet, radio/pa/cassette
1987 DAF LAG PANORAMIC, ZF 6 speed gearbox, 49 seats, double glazing, continental door, Telma, TV/Video Drinks

MAN/NOGE

1997 MAN VANHOOL EOS 230 TRI-AXLE, 28 leather seats, curtains, double glazing, A/C, Webasto, Retarder, cruise control, centre toilet, continental door, rear servery, TV/video with 4 monitors, alloys

NEOPLAN

1998 NEOPLAN TRANSLINER GX, 6 Speed ZF gearbox, 49 seats, air conditioning, curtains, carpets, double glazed, rear continental door, drivers bunk, Telma, auxiliary heater, power door, TV/video, toilet radio/pa/cassette,

1997 NEOPLAN TRANSLINER GX, 6 speed ZF gearbox, 49 seats, A/C, double glazing, tv/video, rear continental door, toilet fridge (Choice of Two)

1996 NEOPLAN MAN TRI-AXLE CITYLINER, 8 speed ZF gearbox, 49 seats double glazing, A/C, servery rear kitchen, centre toilet, TV/Video

1999 NEOPLAN JETLINER, 28 Reclining seats, 6 speed ZF gear box, A/C, central locking, curtains, carpets, toilet, servery, cruise control, TV/Video radio/pa/cassette, alloy wheels

1996 NEOPLAN CITYLINER 8 Speed ZF gear box, 49 Recliners, curtains, double glazed, centre continental door, drivers bunk, telma, auxiliary heater, power door; toilet, Radio/PA/Cass, TV/Video, Drinks machine fridge.

1999 DENNIS JAVELIN GX NEOPLAN TRANSLINER 49 Seats, ZF 6 Speed gear box, A/C, curtains, double glazed, centre continental door, drivers bunk, power door; toilet, radio/PA/cassette, TV/Video, drinks machine Fridge. (Due Sept 04)

SCANIA

1999 SCANIA L94 IRIZAR CENTURY, 49 seats, ZF Auto gearbox, A/C, rear continental door, drivers bunk, Telma, Power door; toilet, TV/Video

1998 SCANIA L94 IRIZAR CENTURY, 53 seats, ZF Auto gearbox, A/C curtains, double glazed, Telma, power door, radio/pa/cassette, fridge.

1998 SCANIA L94 IRIZAR CENTURY, ZF Automatic gear box, 53 Recliners, A/C, curtains, double glazed, Telma, power door, Radio/PA/Cass (Choice of Two, Due Aug 04)

1996 SCANIA TRI AXLE IRIZAR CENTURY, 51 seats, 7 speed gearbox, double glazing, A/C, retarder, centre toilet drinks machine, TV/Video.

SETRA

1997 SETRA S250 MERCEDES 8 speed manual gearbox, 48 seats, A/C, fridge, drinks double glazed, continental door,

1993 MAN TORNADO SETRA 215HD, 8 speed ZF gearbox, 49 seats, A/C, centre continental door, telma, toilet, radio/pa/cassette, fridge

MIDI COACHES

1999 MERCEDES 81HD ROBIN HOOD, 5 speed gearbox, 25 seats, AC, curtains, auxiliary heater, power door, radio/pa/cassette TV/video, drinks

1994 MAN CAETANO ALGARVE, 6 speed gearbox, 35 seats, footrests, aisle carpet, curtains, double glazing, continental door, radio/pa/cassette

VOLVO

1998 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON EXCALIBUR, ZF 6 speed gearbox, 49 seats, A/C, curtains, double glazed, centre continental door, drivers bunk, power door; toilet, radio/PA/cassette, TV/Video, fridge Telma, drinks.

1997 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON 350, ZF 6 speed gear box, 49/53 seats, curtains, centre continental door, double glazed, power door; toilet, radio/pa/cassette, TV/Video, Drinks Fridge

1993 VOLVO B10M VANHOOL ALIZEE, ZF 6 speed gearbox, 49 seats, curtains, double glazing, Webasto, Retarder, rear toilet, continental door, water boiler, radio/pa/cassette, TV/Video

1992 VOLVO PLAXTON PARAMOUNT, ZF 6 speed gearbox, 51 seats, curtains, rear continental door, radio/pa/cassette, TV/Video

1988 VOLVO B9M VANHOOL ZF 6 speed gearbox, 38 seats, courier seat, foot rests, curtains, rear toilet, rear continental door; wheel trims.

IVECO

2000 IVECO EURORIDER BEULAS STERGO E, ZF 8 speed gearbox, 51 seats, recliners, courier seat, aisle carpets, curtains, double glazing, air conditioning Webasto, Retarder, toilet, rear continental door, drinks courier fridge, drinks, power door, wheel trims

1999 IVECO EURORIDER BEULAS STERGO E, AVS gearbox, 48 seats, recliners, courier seat footrests, seat back tables, seat back nets, aisle carpets, curtains double glazing, air conditioning, Webasto, Retarder, centre toilet, centre continental door, servery, water boiler, drinks, courier fridge, radio/pa/cassette TV/Video, wheel trims, power door, auxiliary heater.

1999 IVECO BEULAS EL MUNDO, 8 speed gearbox, 51 seats, head rest covers, carpets, double glazing, air conditioning, Webasto, drivers lockers, centre toilet, continental door, servery, drinks, fridge, radio/pa/cassette, tv/video, wheel trims

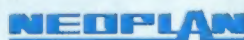
OTHER

2000 DENNIS JAVELIN BERKHOF ZF 6 speed gearbox, 48/49 seats, A/C, curtains, double glazed, Telma, centre continental door, auxiliary heater, power door, toilet, radio/pa/cassette, drinks, fridge.

1997 DENNIS JAVELIN PLAXTON PREMIER 3500, 6 Speed gearbox, 49/51 seats, curtain/blinds, double glazed, rear continental door, power door; toilet, radio/pa.



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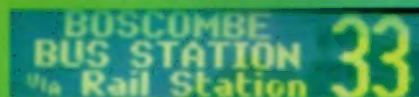


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CBW says

Mark Williams, Editor, CBW, Emap Active, Bretton Court, Bretton, Peterborough PE3 8DZ
or e-mail mark.williams@emap.com

More plan than action

THE Government's School Travel Schemes Bill, launched a while back, had remarkably little press until a councillor in Nottingham suggested charging parents for the home-to-school journey.

Suddenly even the national press cottoned on to what is an ambitious piece of enabling legislation. Get a better flavour of what the Bill says by turning to page 10.

The proposal is to launch School Travel Schemes - a flexible arrangement that sets out with the primary aim of reducing car journeys into school, which clog up the roads every morning and kill a few children to boot.

It is hard to work out why the Confederation of Passenger Transport hasn't been trumpeting the aims of the Bill from the rooftops - it contains far more pluses for the industry than minuses.

The Bill is almost entirely pro-bus; for example, it asks LEAs to concentrate on safety issues - buses are six times safer than cars, so that's sorted out; it suggests looking at school transport as part of the public transport mix; it suggests including over-16s in planning; and it suggests staggered school day start times - something I've banded on about for years.

So what is going on now? The Government wanted 20 or so LEAs to sign up for pilot schemes, in which they'd

make efforts to identify the modal travel pattern for their schools. The problem is, they haven't.

'It is hard to work out why the CPT hasn't been trumpeting the aims of the Bill from the rooftops'

It's early days, but our informants suggest that very few authorities will want the extra work. That's a shame because, in common with the Government's Green Transport Plans for workplaces, something like this could be very effective in doing what really needs to be done - concentrating the minds of the public on the appalling transport choices (pronounced "car journeys") they make each day.

Armed only with children's postcodes, it would not be beyond the wit of Man to discover whether a child could have caught the bus or has a safe cycling route to school. It would not be beyond our ken to use this data to structure better road priorities, or encourage parents to

put their kids on the bus.

To make it happen, LEAs and companies need more than enabling Acts. They need a bit more carrot... and certainly a small helping of stick.

● I'm no Eurosceptic, but I am mystified by the EC's latest attack on side-facing seats.

In the first place, the current statistic tends to suggest that not a single injury or fatality in the UK can be attributed to seatbelts being fixed to side-facing seats on full-sized coaches.

In the second place, the only research examines the seatbelt retention issues in the context of frontal impact accidents on minibuses. In point of fact, the majority of serious injuries and fatalities on full-sized vehicles - few as they are - are sustained when passengers fall through the widow apertures after the coach has rolled over. In this scenario, lap seatbelts on side-facing seats are as effective as any.

So why, when the weight of evidence suggests that the safety issue applies only to minibuses, are full-sized vehicles included in the proposal?

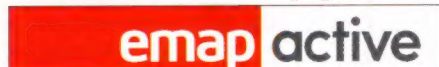


Mark Williams, Editor

Coach and Bus Week is a member of the following organisations:



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Oxford Tube spends £8m

MARK WILLIAMS EDITOR

THE biggest-ever single-order, single-service fleet of express coaches has been delivered to Stagecoach service Oxford Tube.

The £8 million order saw 25 13.8-metre Neoplan Skyliners go on the road this week along the hugely successful corridor, upgrading the previous fleet of



Wheelchairs loaded via ramps

Jonckheere Monaco deckers which have now covered almost a million miles each. And the new vehicles are wheelchair-accessible.

Oxford Tube has opted for Skyliners as one of the most mature double-deck vehicles in the marketplace and, based on its experience, has once again specified MAN engines - this time the 410bhp units with ZF AS-Tronic automatic gearbox and a ZF intarder. It has used the centre door access to get a wheelchair aboard via manual ramps attached by the driver. When not in use, the wheelchair space is occupied by two tip-up seats.

The fully air-conditioned fleet has washroom/toilet and eight-camera CCTV. An inverter provides 240-volt three-pin sockets

Express service grows big enough for massive fleet

next to every seat. All upholstery is in a specially-woven Oxford Tube moquette made by Holdsworth.

The service is also defined by attention to detail. For example, breakfast can be purchased from 0600hrs to 0800hrs weekdays and under 16s can travel with an adult free. On top of this, all tickets can be booked on-line and smartcard readers tie in with the Wayfarer ticket machines.

The massive investment has been triggered by continuing growth in the Oxford Tube's ridership. In 1987, not long after Harry Blundred set it up, the service had 230,000 passenger journeys. In 2004, it will clock up an incredible 1.6 million passenger journeys despite getting competition from Oxford Bus Company's almost identical

OxfordExpress service.

Managing director of Stagecoach Oxfordshire, Martin Sutton, said his chairman, Brian Souter, had been closely involved with the investment, particularly as it runs alongside Mr Souter's 'baby', megabus.com: "They are two different parts of the market but megabus.com is actually establishing itself very well, complementing Tube," Mr Sutton told CBW.

Mr Sutton said two of the Jonckheeres had made the trip to London for a seminar with Transport for London - which intends promoting express coach services throughout the capital: "Express coach travel has been ignored a bit in the transport strategy," said Mr Sutton. "Marketing the London end of the Oxford Tube is a different ball

Arriva gets Merseyline

ARRIVA North West and Wales has bought Liverpool-based Meadowhall - which trades as Merseyline Travel.

It is understood that the deal is for the company's vehicles and four routes only, the 23 staff transferring to Arriva and the buses - though absorbed into Arriva's fleet - being replaced on the routes by lowfloor buses.

"We are delighted with this acquisition, which will enable us to further strengthen our network and improve the quality of public transport in Merseyside," said Bob Hind, MD.

Lucketts' new parks deal

LUCKETTS Travel claims it is selling the cheapest tickets to top British theme parks this summer.

It has struck a deal to sell discount tickets to Alton Towers, Thorpe Park and Chessington World of Adventures.

Customers can purchase the tickets on the company's website - www.lucketts.co.uk - and Lucketts will send a voucher by e-mail to customers.

VOSA gains powers to stop vehicles

COACH and bus operators face more roadside checks after VOSA was given powers to stop vehicles for examination last week.

The powers, which mean the body is no longer dependent on police support, should increase the number of vehicles of all types examined from 2003/2004's figure of around 24,000.

VOSA says it will increase its effectiveness and flexibility in targeting unroadworthy vehicles and free up traffic police resources. Previously, police always had to be present during spot checks as only they had the authority to stop vehicles.

Announcing the change in the law, Roads Minister David Jamieson said: "This is good news for road users. Trials of the new

powers have been a great success and have demonstrated that, as well as freeing up valuable police resources, they have improved effectiveness in targeting unroadworthy vehicles that endanger other road users and helped to

combat the minority of drivers who break the laws of the road."

The scheme was piloted by six police forces - Cambridgeshire, North Wales, Northumberland, Greater Manchester, Staffordshire and Metropolitan.



DfT consults on foreign driver fining scheme

THE Department for Transport is consulting on proposals to stop foreign hauliers and coach drivers who commit motoring offences avoiding penalties by leaving the country.

Among proposals is a deposit scheme where non-UK resident drivers must pay an immediate deposit at the roadside equal to

the fine that their offence would attract. This could also be extended to overseas car drivers in the future. It also wants a fairer system of penalties for offences through a graduated fixed penalty scheme, and giving VOSA the power, as well as the police, to issue fixed penalty notices to offending vehicles.

Said road safety minister David Jamieson: "The Government is keen to clear up the unfair situation where foreign hauliers can avoid paying a penalty by leaving the country. It is only right that foreign hauliers are treated the same as UK ones, particularly as UK drivers in Europe cannot escape penalties."

on accessible deckers

of 13.8-metre Skyliners

game from getting to our Oxford passengers.

"We are now trying to make a better job of it. For example, how many people living in Hillingdon realise that it takes the same time for them to reach Oxford as it does central London?"

The relaunch is accompanied by an all-new website.

The Oxford Tube now runs at a ten-minute frequency until 0700hrs, around 15 minutes until 1830hrs, 20 minutes until 0100hrs, then at hourly intervals until 0500hrs. Journey time is around one hour 40 minutes.

● **What's the thinking behind Oxford Tube? Read the full story of Stagecoach in Oxfordshire's growth next week - only in CBW**

Right: Skyliners are Oxford Tube's biggest ever investment



easyBus set for launch this month

THE PLANNED launch of easyBus - an offshoot of easyJet - is scheduled for August 19 and advanced booking facilities have just been opened.

The easyBus services provide a link between Milton Keynes and London (Hendon Central) with prices starting from as low as £1 per seat for a one-way journey. A second route is also planned for introduction, which will link Luton Airport with Hendon Central. Other routes linking London from a number of locations along the M1 corridor will be added in due course.

Passengers can book their journey on www.easyBus.co.uk

easyGroup chairman Stelios Hajianou has issued a challenge - "Watch out Richard Branson!" he said. "I am now going to offer consumers a cheaper service than your trains - which will also run on time."

easyBus has an initial fleet of ten 16-seat Mercedes Sprinter minibuses carrying the familiar orange 'easy' styled livery. The compa-

ny anticipates cost will be minimised because they will avoid congestion charging in central London and will be dropping passengers at a convenient location for accessing the Underground or local buses. easyBus argues its use of minibuses will allow high-frequency operation and help meet the need for low-cost, affordable public transport linking towns, cities and airports not currently served by rail or traditional bus

and coach services.

Fare pricing varies according to how early passengers make their booking. Prices will start from £1 one-way but peak fares are liable to be more expensive and passengers with more than one piece of hand luggage or large suitcases will be expected to purchase a seat for it. Passengers turning up without a reserved booking and paying on board, provided there are any spaces, will have to pay £5.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Hours rules slated

CPT operations director Steven Salmon is calling EU regulations on weekly rest periods for drivers "by far the worst aspect of the proposal [on drivers hours regulations] and they comprehensively foul up coach touring and coach hire in one fell swoop." Mr Salmon was quoted in the Confederation for Passenger Transport's newsletter *Newsline*.

Strike goes on

Bus drivers at First South Yorkshire are to remain on strike after they rejected the company's latest pay proposal. Drivers are striking over pay and the fact that recent pay deals were better than offered to them. The strike started last month and is planned to run for an indefinite period.

Positive steps

The four local authorities whose poor performance led to them having transport funding withheld have taken enough positive steps towards improvement to qualify for the capital funds, says transport minister Tony McNulty.

Good practice guide

AEA Technology has commissioned FaberMaunsell to develop a guide to best practice in fleet operations in the public sector.

MAN is to introduce new models at IAA

MARTIN COLE TECHNICAL AND MINIBUS EDITOR

'Neoman Bus' will also display new technology



Lion's City: the new urban citybus with a striking exterior and interior design

MAN NUTZFAHZEUGE will be introducing several new products and new technology at the IAA exhibition in Hanover from September 23 to 30 (see our pre-IAA MAN focus on pages 22-24).

Exhibiting as Neoman Bus, the company has 3,600 square metres in Hall 12, which is packed with MAN and Neoplan product.

MAN describes its two-brand business as "together different" and believes the extended range has something to offer all operators.

A total of six complete vehicles and one chassis represent

the MAN brand. They include a new citybus called Lion's City, dual-purpose Lion's City T, Lion's Regio inter-urban coach, Lion's City DD, a Lion's Star and a 13.7m Lion's Coach L. The chassis is an A69 CNG model, highlighting the company's prowess in the chassis and gas bus sector.

Lion's City is the new urban citybus with a striking exterior and interior design with curved sides and full-height windows.

Lion's City T is a new low-entry bus for urban and inter-urban operation. The T stands for 'Twin' and effectively translates as dual purpose.

The Lion's Regio is the new intercity coach and is completely new. It was designed to compete effectively with new generations of inter-urban coaches from other manufacturers.

Lion's City DD, the double decker popular with BVG - Berlin's transport authority, which ordered 101 last year, has been running a prototype in scheduled-service operations and the first series vehicles joined BVG recently. They measure 13.7m and have three axles. Passenger capacity is 132 with 80 seated and 52 standing. Fitted with Euro 4 engines they offer easy access

and can accommodate two wheelchairs

The award-winning Lion's Coach and premium specification Lion's Star will also appear.

Models on show representing Neoplan include a 13.8m Skyliner double-deck coach, a Starliner, a Cityliner, a Tourliner, a Trendliner and a Centroliner citybus.

The Trendliner is a brand new citybus offering that will be launched at the event and Tourliner, seen for the first time in 2002, will be available from next year in right-hand drive and is scheduled for the UK coach market.

Soton tickets smart-en up

WAYFARER Transit Systems is working with Southampton City Council and public transport operators to introduce a concessionary and commercial smart card system.

Operators in the region will be upgraded with the firm's Smart TGX 150 ticket machines, and smart-enabled point-of-sale terminals will be located around the city.

The scheme starts this summer and is expected to be completed next year, according to Wayfarer.

Van Hool Astrons trio ordered by Eavesway

EAVESWAY of Wigan has ordered three 13.8-metre Van Hool Astrons as success follows success.

The football club specialist has landed itself the Manchester United team contract for a further five years and is celebrating by replacing the current super-exec with a 36-seat, MAN-powered Astron equipped with everything from tables to leather seating and a full kitchen. The coach will be delivered mid-season.

Eavesway's football work now includes team and supporter travel for Everton, Bolton

Wanderers, Wigan Athletic, Huddersfield and Wrexham - plus two other smaller teams - and has contracts with Wigan Rugby League and other rugby clubs.

The other two Astrons, based on VDL Bus's XF power unit, are specifically designed for the cruise market, which has been a growing area of Eavesway's business for the last three years. They will, again, be 13.84-metre vehicles, fitted with 54 seats, rear floor-mounted toilet and two drinks/chiller stations.

"We could have got 59 seats if we had chosen a centre toilet

but this work is all about keeping customers happy," said MD Mike Eaves. "We also do the administration and reservations."

Working with P&O Cruises, Eavesway collects and delivers passengers to major ports such as Glasgow and Newcastle along fixed corridors. It also does some shore excursion work out of Liverpool.

"The icing on the cake this year is that we have just been reassessed for Investors in People, and have three years' accreditation," said Mr Eaves. "It helps show that we care about the quality of what we do."

Van Hool to display seven vehicles at show

VAN HOOL is displaying three luxury touring coaches, a dual-purpose coach and three buses at the bus and coach stand in Hall 11 at the forthcoming International Motorshow, (IAA) Hanover, from September 23-30.

The Belgian manufacturer is looking for a larger slice of the German market. The TD927 Astromega is a new version of the tri-axle double-deck coach in a new length, ie, 14.10 metres. It is equipped to comply with EC Directive 2001/85/EG and, has two staircases, seating 89.

The T917 Altano high-deck coach from the T9 range has been

equipped with an automatic fire extinguishing system in the power compartment and the third coach on display will be the newest addition to the T9 range, the 13m T916 Astron. All three coaches have ZF AS-Tronic gearboxes.

The two-axle T916 CL is the first 'dual-purpose' CL coach in 13-metre length. In front of the centre door four seats are fitted on a removable platform. When removed, it offers a spacious area for standees, prams, buggies, etc. This vehicle has a fire-extinguishing system in the engine compartment.

Minor styling refinements give the coaches a 'new look', emphasising the typical design of the T9 coaches.

The three buses on display will comprise the A309, an entirely new 24-seater lowfloor midibus, 9.9m long and 2.4m wide, with kneeling suspension; the A320 in Luxemburgian specification, is a two-door lowfloor bus that combines low access and maximum seating capacity, with 41 seats and two tip-up seats, suited to the German market; and the AGG300 is a double artic full lowfloor with a 185-passenger capacity.

Aircoach launches 'world-first' integrated phone ticket system

RAPIDLY expanding express coach operator Aircoach has launched what it describes as "the world's first fully integrated web, SMS and voice ticketing system."

The system enables the purchase and delivery of tickets to passengers' mobile phones.

The luxury operator, which commenced services with a single airport route around five years ago, now operates an expanding network of routes within the Dublin region and beyond, with a new hourly service to Belfast launched on July 27. A 15million investment in the company by FirstGroup earlier in the year has provided the funds for considerable expansion and upgrading of services.

The new ticketing system allows potential travellers to buy their tickets for any route using the Internet, SMS text message or voice prompt. Once credit card

details have been verified a specially coded picture message is sent to their mobile phone. Passengers then simply open the picture message and hold the phone over the scanning machine located on the coach or at the airport terminal.

Aircoach Managing Director, John O'Sullivan, points out that Ireland has one of the highest levels of mobile phone usage in Europe with market penetration of 87% and 3.4 million subscribers and says he believes the new system to be the way forward.

"Delivering Aircoach tickets to your mobile means they're now truly portable and safe. We currently issue almost a million paper tickets per year and our aim is to reduce that by 40% in 12 months. It also reduces the amount of cash in circulation and provides us with a more detailed breakdown of

ticket sales since electronic tickets can be easily monitored."

Tickets may be bought by texting a special number, visiting the Aircoach website, or by phoning the company to book in the conventional way.

Meanwhile, the launch of a new hourly service from Dublin Airport to Belfast put the company in head-to-head competition with state-run operators Bus Eireann and Translink, who operate a joint service along the same route on a two-hourly frequency, continuing on into Dublin city centre. The Aircoach single fare of 20 is one euro dearer than the competition but the company believes that the frequency and comfort levels of its service, operated with high-end Setra coaches, will provide a real alternative to airport-bound passengers.

● **Got an Irish story? Send it to: Gabriel@allaboutbuses.com**

NEWS IN BRIEF

School speed limits

JMP Consulting has been commissioned by East Ayrshire Council to implement mandatory 20mph speed limits near 56 schools in the authority's area. Funding has been made available by the Scottish Executive as part of a £27m boost to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety around schools.

Group goes silver

The Ealing Community Transport Group recently celebrated 25 years of delivering community services as a social enterprise - or, in other words, as an organisation that uses business solutions to help achieve clear social and environmental objectives.

Hundred not out

Stagecoach in the South Downs celebrated 100 years of buses in Worthing on July 24. The Sussex Motor Road Car Company and Worthing Motor Omnibus Company both started operations in 1904. Traffic commissioner Chris Heaps was invited to cut a birthday cake.

Supplier at show

PSV industry supplier Leyland Auto is to exhibit at this year's Automechanika in Frankfurt, Germany from September 14-19.

Vectis course

Isle of Wight bus operator Southern Vectis is introducing a special customer care course as part of its staff-training programme. The first influx of operational staff are attending the first one-day intensive customer care course at the Southern Vectis head office in Nelson Road, Newport.

Workers' website

Three former London Transport bus workers, Tony Rimmer, David Laine, and Chris Hall have such fond memories of their time at the West Ham garage that they have set up a website which they hope will keep all former staff in touch with each other. Visit www.westhamgarage.co.uk

Innovation festival

Businesses across Dorset have the chance to benefit from the ideas of leading companies and business experts at a Festival of Innovation taking place at Bournemouth University on September 15. Details from Jayne Askew on 01202 503812.



Aircoach: commenced services with a single airport route around five years ago

NatEx coach division has record six months

ANDY RODEN REORTER

...and bus division profit beats that of the rail division

NATIONAL Express Group's coach division recorded its best ever six-monthly profits of £4.2m in the six months to the end of June.

Turnover was up to £87.8m, from last year's £85.3m, normalised operating profit rising £1.3m. Chief executive Phil White said: "This excellent result, the best ever achieved by this division, resulted from a 6% increase in passenger numbers which arose from extending the appeal of coach travel by rolling out best-value fares and the launch of a major TV campaign."

In September, it will introduce 'state-of-the-art' vehicles featuring climate control, all leather seating and onboard television entertainment. 'Coachcom' technology will provide real-time arrival and departure information as well as improving capacity management by allowing real-time reservations to maximise seat utilisation.

Redevelopment of Digbeth in Birmingham is expected to start in early 2005, opening in summer 2006.

Revenue in its bus operations rose to £115.1m (£103.8m last year) but operating profit fell £1m to £21.1m, something NEG blames partly on the continued financing of buses through oper-

ating leases.

A full review of the West Midlands bus network has seen it test a number of new products to stimulate the market, including a low-value flat fare service from Bromford to the centre of Birmingham.

NEG says it is working with Centro and Birmingham City Council on the rollout of a statutory quality partnership, which sees the introduction of 11 articulated buses (see Deliveries, pages 26-27).

The group's entry into the London bus market is said to be making good progress. NEG is focussing on improving the profitability of the operation by restructuring the business and renewing contracts on improved terms.

It now runs 15 contracts and, to cope with the extra business, is operating from the refurbished Walworth Garage in Camberwell in the autumn.

In 2004, the entire Travel Dundee fleet will be lowfloor with CCTV coverage - 11 years ahead of the Government's deadline.

NEG's rail division saw profits grow but, despite turnover of £838.6m, operating profit was still less than for buses, rising to £15.7m from last year's £9m.

Group turnover rose to £1266.7m from £1258.8m, while operating profit was up 9.4% to £61.9m. Pre-tax profits also rose, by 19.2% to £47.9m, from last

year's £40.2m.

Shareholders will receive an interim dividend of 9.35p per share - an improvement on last year's 8.5p.



NatEx: coach business up 6%

Side-facing seats set to be abolished by EC

THE European Commission plans to ban use of side-facing seats on new coaches and minibuses over safety concerns.

Research conducted by TRL shows that passengers in side-facing seats are more likely to be injured in a crash and that seat-belts are of little use in an accident. The ban - it is unclear when it will take effect - could affect operators running 'band buses' and coaches with luxury lounge areas - but only applies to new vehicles.

The research shows it is not possible to provide side-facing

seats with safety belts ensuring the same level of safety to the occupants as front-facing sets.

EU ministers have not yet taken a final decision on the issue and, after voting in the EU Council, the proposals will return to the European Parliament for a second reading.

The Confederation of Passenger Transport's view is that the ban will have little effect on UK operators as there are relatively few coaches with side-facing seats.

Says spokesman Stephen Heard: "The safety arguments are

probably not easy to argue with - they're probably true - and there are other ways of arranging seats for executive travel. CPT decided very early on that we wouldn't go to the wall because of safety concerns."

CPT also says the research takes little account of the UK's good safety record.

The International Road Transport Union agrees with this, arguing the research was limited to analysis of UK minibus accidents and on simulations undertaken with values only applicable to minibuses.

Trent Barton bringing in real-time info

INDEPENDENT operator Trentbarton is introducing a real-time information system on its Rainbow 5 services between Nottingham and East Midlands Airport.

Buses are fitted with transmitters that send signals to satellites, which are beamed to its base. Passengers can access the information on their mobile phones, on the Internet, or at bus stops on the route.

Training firm could close

AN ESSEX coach training company has been ordered to cease activities in a row over vehicle access.

RS Training Services of Witham has been told by Braintree District Council planners that access to its training site is unsafe for heavy vehicles. Company boss Michael Prince has said he will appeal against the planners' ruling.

He said that the ruling, which orders all training, even on site, to stop is excessive. He added that he was now looking for a new site to

operate from but, if he was not successful, the company would have to cease trading.

The company, which employs 15 staff, has been in operation for 18 months. Planners ruled against the company following complaints from local residents. There had been fears that the access to the site on a double bend could lead to accidents.

A Government inspector will hear the appeal on November 3 at Braintree Town Hall.

West Midlands gets new tourism organisation

A NEW strategic organisation promoting tourism in the West Midlands is to be formed to increase the number of visitors in the region.

Tourism West Midlands has been formed after Advantage West Midlands drew together tourism experts from across the area.

It will be the first time that Coventry and Warwickshire have

been represented by a single destination management partnership on a regional tourism group.

Also involved in Tourism West Midlands are representatives from Shropshire, Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Ironbridge Gorge Museum, Stoke-on-Trent, the National Trust, Weston Park, Arts Council West Midlands, British Waterways, Birmingham and Advantage West Midlands.

RPC Wales and Cardiff Bus agree that integration is a priority

THE Rail Passengers Committee for Wales and major operator Cardiff Bus say integration between bus and rail is a major issue for both companies.

Improving service frequency,

reliability and availability are also issues the organisations agree on and Cardiff Bus says it wants support in developing an interchange between Cardiff's bus station and central railway station.

Las Vegas takes guided buses

IRISBUS is supplying ten Civis guided vehicles to Las Vegas' Metropolitan Area Express Bus Line.

The US version of the vehicle is 18.3 metres long and can carry

120 people. It is guided by Siemens' optical guidance system. They will operate on a 6.5-mile route from Las Vegas boulevard north and US Air Force Nellis base.



Ten Irisbus Civis guided vehicles being bought for Las Vegas service

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Schools out for some?

THE Government wants to improve school transport - and its proposals could affect every operator running a contract with Local Education Authorities.

The current legislation is now around half a century old and things have changed an awful lot in those 50 years: many children travel much further to school than ever before. Use of cars has doubled on the school run in the past 20 years: walking and cycling have fallen, as has use of public transport. It is a major issue and, in the Draft School Travel Schemes Bill, the Government has set out an ambitious programme of experimentation.

And experimentation it must be called: there are few hard and fast instructions to LEAs contained in the document. At the core of this is the creation of School Travel Schemes. These essentially give LEAs a great deal of flexibility in deciding how best to limit the number of cars on the school run. The first are hoped to start in September 2006, running until July 2010.

This is what the Government says: "Provision may improve for one or more of: Pupils travelling to denominational schools; pupils in English-speaking areas

In the Draft School Travel Schemes Bill, the Government has set out an ambitious programme of experimentation that could have a drastic effect on operators' revenue. Andy Roden reports

of Wales travelling to Welsh language schools; pupils travelling along routes that parents consider unsafe; pupils engaged in extracurricular activities, whether on or off school premises.

And the list of tools available to achieve this looks impressive - LEAs can use any, all, or indeed, none, of the following:

- Innovative purchasing arrangements, particularly in collaboration with other forms of publicly-funded transport provision
- Modern technology in route planning, fare collection and scheme management
- Closer links with post-16 transport policies leading to more consistent provision for older pupils
- Wider use of staggered school hours, introduced through collaboration with schools
- An enhanced focus on transport safety issues
- Transport solutions tailored to rural schools and their communities

The Government seems quite keen on using new technology:

it highlights how Somerset's LEA uses a system to identify home-to-school travel patterns, letting them design more appropriate bus services to minimise short car journeys.

Also on the cards could be better integration with other council-funded transport services, such as health and social services. The Government hopes these school travel schemes will see councils look at integrating these better, getting pupils to school, as well as providing a better service for adults who use public transport to access healthcare, day care and leisure activities. This could particularly benefit rural communities, whose bus services are often poor, but which see a school bus every day.

Staggering school start times is yet another option LEAs could consider. This could offer real benefits to LEAs, as even a 15-minute difference could allow one bus to serve two schools.

The standard of school buses is also being examined, with this warning line: "We do not accept that it is uneconomic or undesirable to invest in school buses." It also says operators, parents, schools and LEAs can do more to improve behaviour on the buses, and for authorities involved in their scheme to set out a strategy for securing good behaviour on buses.

LEAs and local transport authorities must explain what they are doing to do to ensure "good quality, well maintained vehicles, appropriate for school use, are used for school transport." It urges parents and pupils' views to be taken into account when developing services.

Finally, there is the potential banana skin of charging for school transport. While this could usefully support plans to invest in new vehicles, the Government is concerned about its potential effects: particularly for families just above the free school meal eligibility level, and for those who have to travel long distances to



schools in rural areas. LEAs must justify why proposed charging will not increase car use.

LEAs will have to set out charging policies in their application to join a school travel scheme, outlining how many pupils will be charged, and what the level of the charges is.

LEAs won't be able to charge for school travel and take money from the school travel budget - existing funds must continue to support school travel.

The combined effect of this could be to change the way some operators operate school transport runs. Staggered start times could mean fewer, but bigger vehicles running between schools - cutting work. Conversely, combining some rural services with the school bus could bring operators much-needed new business. Charging will be a thorny issue, for parents and operators. It may well be up to LEAs and operators to strike a deal.

If all this sounds a little vague, that's because it is. Until LEAs reveal their proposals for being part of a school travel scheme, it will be unclear about how coach and bus operators will be affected. It's unlikely, though, that they will be able to work up the schemes entirely in isolation and anyone who depends on school business could well benefit from getting in touch and offering their expert advice.

There's little doubt that, should these school travel schemes prove successful operators may have to adjust their expectations of a revenue stream that has changed little in half a century.



Government concerned about effects of charging for school transport

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ICT launches series of waterways tours...

MARK BARTON TOURISM EDITOR

LONDON and Sheffield wholesaler ICT has launched a new series of tours utilising inland waterways.

According to ICT, there are more than 4,000 miles of inland waterways in this country, originally built to link mines and quarries with factories, mills, markets and deepwater ports.

Damian Wright, ICT product

executive, said: "Recognising the potential of these relatively unspoiled areas of interest, we have created a series of comprehensive and informative tours for our coach operator clients to relive the history of these fantastic waterways."

An initial four tours have been released on to the market:



Limavady golf resort in County Londonderry will host 'challenge'

...and 2004 Golf Challenge

THE ICT GOLF Challenge 2004

- The Birmingham canal network and the Warwickshire Waterways
- Ellesmere Port, the Anderton Boat Lift and the Waterways near Chester
- The Norfolk Broads
- Edinburgh and the Falkirk Wheel

Damian Wright said he was confident the new tours would prove popular with coach operators and their clients and promised more similar product to come: "We are proposing to expand the programme in the near future as there are so many more little gems throughout

Britain to discover."

● **More details on 020 7538 4627.**

ICT has chosen the Radisson SAS Roe Park Hotel & Golf Resort in Limavady, County Londonderry as the host for its 2004 Golf Challenge.

The hotel is set on its own 18-hole parkland golf course offering full leisure facilities. The event itself will run over four days. As well as the golf there will be a full programme of social events.

The ICT 2004 Golf Challenge will be held on October 24 to 27.

● **More details from Steve Moore on 020 7538 4627.**

Blasts from the past

IRONBRIDGE open-air museum Blists Hill is promising groups its best ever Family Fireworks Extravaganza this November.

Visitors will be able to enter Blists Hill at 1800hrs on the evening of the fireworks event to see the streets illuminated by gaslight as they would have been in the 19th century. The town's shops, cottages and workshops will be open for visitors to enter and talk to the 'resident' Victorians, dressed in the costume of the day.

The fireworks show has been completely redesigned.

The 2004 Family Fireworks Extravaganza takes place at Blists Hill on Saturday November 6. Tickets cost £5 adult and £2 child at the gate. There's a 50p discount per ticket when purchased in advance (plus £1 p&p).

● **Details on 01952 884391.**

CTC plans Ulster educational in the autumn

AS part of its ongoing commitment to running informative and good value educational trips, the Coach Tourism Council is offering members the chance to check out one of the fastest-growing coaching destinations in the UK this autumn.

Halloween in Derry, the North and West Counties of Ireland, departs on Saturday October 30.

The action-packed four-day itinerary kicks off with ferry travel with Stena to Belfast and includes a tour of the Glens of Antrim and Causeway Coast and - sure to be popular this - the opportunity to ride the bog train to the Bushmills Distillery, where the group will enjoy a VIP tour.

Members will also be able to participate in Derry's special Halloween celebrations, complete with fireworks and ball at a four-star city hotel, and tour both Armagh and St Patrick's Country, County Down.

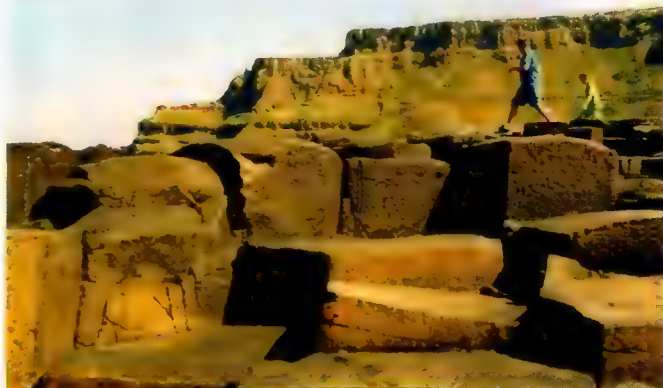
Overnight accommodation can be provided in Dumfries, Castle Douglas, Carlisle or Windermere for the night before departure (October 29) at cost.

Cost for the first person is just £50, spouse £75. There is also the option of travelling by air.

"Great value and exclusive educational are a key member benefit of the CTC," said chair-

man, Peter Fenn. "They offer a superb opportunity for networking and an invaluable chance to check out the pros and cons of a huge range of destinations for coach tours and excursions in the company of like-minded people."

● **Details and bookings from the CTC office on 020 8461 8325.**



Itinerary includes tour of the Causeway Coast



Notable factor is number of coach operators featuring London for first time or increasing number of tours

LHTS predicts record bookings this winter as capital booms

LONDON specialist London Hotel and Travel Services (LHTS) predicts a record forthcoming autumn/winter season as the number of confirmed bookings with deposits reaches a level not seen for a number of years.

Although LHTS has shown steady growth over the past few years, it has been the high number of future reservations coming through the company so early in the year that has prompted managing director Tony Hess to confirm that LHTS is enjoying one of its best years ever.

"It's becoming increasingly evi-

dent that the demand for London is on the increase," Mr Hess told CBW. "It seems that London is popular once again and on a big scale.

"June, July and August, which are traditionally quiet months for future sales, have been tremendous, with advanced bookings up by nearly a third on the corresponding period last year.

"One notable factor has been the increase in the number of coach operators who are either featuring London for the first time or who are increasing the number of tours on their existing London programme. Another encouraging sign is the

drop in cancellations and the increase in passenger loadings.

"One area which can be highlighted for significant growth over the past 12 months has been the midweek theatre market. Groups stay overnight between Monday and Thursday and can see two shows."

● LHTS is now taking group bookings for overnight packages for next year's flower shows. The world-famous Chelsea Flower Show will take place between May 23-27 2005 and the Hampton Court Flower Show between July 7-10 2005.

● More details on 020 7233 5322.

Simone joins the 'Beach'

PLEASURE Beach, Blackpool, has appointed Simone Roche as its new head of sales.

She will head the team responsible for Travel Trade Sales (which includes coach operators), Corporate Sales, the Call Centre, Key Accounts and Telesales.

Simone started her sales career following seven years active service as an officer with the Royal Navy from 1988 to 1995. She then worked as conference and banqueting manager at Aintree Racecourse and joins Blackpool Pleasure Beach from Southport Theatre, where she was sales manager.

Simone Roche said: "I am thrilled to be joining Pleasure Beach, Blackpool, at such an exciting time, both for the Pleasure Beach and the resort of Blackpool. The introduction of the Big Blue Hotel has added to the broad mix on offer and promoting products such as the spectacular world-class shows along with the greatest collection of rides in the world presents a thrilling opportunity."

With over six million visitors a year, Blackpool Pleasure Beach is the UK's biggest tourist attraction.



Simone Roche: head of sales

UK hotels: getting better but still not fully recovered says PKF

AS incoming tourism figures continue to improve, hotel room occupancy and rates increased

significantly both in and out of London last month.

According to the latest figures

released by accountants and business advisers PKF, London hotels achieved a rise in occupancy of over 5% to 83.1%. Average room rate in the capital rose 8.5% to £113.93, pushing rooms yield up over 14% to £94.62. This compares to occupancy of 78.7%, a room rate of £104.97 and rooms yield of £82.69 in June 2003.

Outside London, hoteliers saw occupancy up 3.5% to 75.6% and room rate increased 3.6% to £64.45. Rooms yield rose 7.2% to £48.72. In the regions this com-

pared to occupancy of 73%, a room rate of £62.20 and rooms yield of £45.43 in June 2003.

Robert Barnard, hotel consultancy services director at PKF, said: "The results for the London and regional hotels are very encouraging and reflect the much-improved trading conditions in the UK. We should be mindful, however, that London hoteliers are yet to break the £100 rooms yield barrier - a feat they achieved comfortably in June 2000 and June 2001."

UK HOTEL MARKET JUNE 2004

* Source: PKF

REGIONAL HOTELS

	2004	2003	change
Average daily room rate per occupied room	£64.45	£62.20	3.6%
Average daily room occupancy	75.6%	73%	3.5%
Average daily rooms yield per available room	£48.72	£45.43	7.2%

LONDON HOTELS

	2004	2003	change
Average daily room rate per occupied room	£113.93	£104.97	8.5%
Average daily room occupancy	83.1%	78.7%	5.4%
Average daily rooms yield per available room	£94.62	£82.69	14.4%

Fraser Eagle appoints new managing director

ANDY RODEN REPORTER

ACCRINGTON rail replacement specialist Fraser Eagle Management Services has appointed John Brooks as managing director following the promotion of predecessor Kevin Dean to chief operating officer.

Mr Brooks joined Fraser Eagle a year ago from Network Rail, where he was project interface manager on the massive - and highly successful - Leeds 1st station rebuilding in a nine-year career which started in 1993. Before that, he spent 21 years in the Army, where he rose to the

rank of regimental sergeant major. "I like the product, and I like the company. My new role's a continuation of my previous involvement as operations director. I think I've got a great team - everybody's got a great attitude and are really positive."

Says Kevin Dean of John's appointment: "John joined us a year ago as director production and has made a major contribution to the enhanced performance of Fraser Eagle's national operation."

"Despite the reputation of

Former RSM joins from Network Rail

RSMs, he's quite gentle with us. However, he does get results and has enabled Fraser Eagle to up its game consistently, delivering a cohesive, professional operation."

Fraser Eagle has taken the opportunity to restructure its top-level team and Mr Dean will work closely with chief executive officer Chris Chambers.

In a statement, Mr Chambers said: "These are exciting times for Fraser Eagle. We aim to consolidate and expand the company while at the same time actively retaining our sense of family val-



John Brooks: joined from Network Rail

ues and closeness. I wish John every success in his new role as managing director."

Shelley shock

AFTER almost 20 years with Solent Blue Line, highly-respected operations director Peter Shelley was made redundant last week in a shock move.

SBL says its organisation is "overloaded with commercial and business development experts. Operations management doesn't have enough depth." Mr Shelley's departure marks the start of a senior management restructuring that will see a new service delivery director appointed in the coming weeks.

Mr Shelley helped found the company in 1987 and has been with it ever since. Announcing

his departure, he said: "It has been fascinating seeing the company grow from 16 vehicles to a £7 million a year business and I am looking forward to using the experience elsewhere in the public transport industry. I've really enjoyed my time with SBL, and this is a good opportunity to move on within the bus industry. It has all been settled very amicably."

Parent company Southern Vectis' group managing director Stuart Linn thanked Peter for his "loyal and supportive service" and said he wished him "every success in the future."



Phil Smith: in coach and bus industry since he left school

Smith becomes operations director at Plymouth Citybus

FORMER Travel Dundee operations manager Phil Smith is the new operations director of Plymouth Citybus, making the lengthy move south recently.

Phil has been in the coach and bus industry since he left school aged 16 in 1980. Starting with National Bus Company, he has held management posts with Stagecoach, Arriva and National Express Group.

Asked why he chose to move such a huge distance, Phil told CBW: "The incentive to move was the challenge of being in a city that's growing and where the local authority and key stakeholders are taking a really strategic view of growing bus travel."

"My primary objective is to grow the market through route-

branding initiatives and better, more integrated ticketing and fares. I've found people in the area really easy to get on with - there's a can-do attitude."

Municipally-owned Plymouth Citybus operates 165 buses and 15 coaches on a variety of services in the area. Despite its ownership, Mr Smith says it has "a very independent feel."

The company is currently benefiting from a short-term cut in city centre car-parking spaces because of extensive redevelopment and it hopes to retain many passengers who have switched from their cars.

Forthcoming developments with Citybus include the delivery of eight new Dennis 10.6m SLF Darts with Pointer bodies.



Peter Shelley: 'settled amicably'

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Licensing Legal

'Tracky' fleet may be cut

'Company's good reputation being damaged by appalling levels of vandalism on older buses'

Maintenance

EXECUTIVES at major bus company Yorkshire Traction Ltd are waiting to hear whether their large fleet will be reduced following a public inquiry last week.

Several senior managers from the company attended the North Eastern Traffic Area hearing last Friday but will have to wait until August 2 for the outcome.

Staff appeared at the public inquiry in Leeds to answer charges brought under sections 16, 17 and Schedule 3 of the 1981 Public Passenger Vehicles Act and Section 26 of the 1985 Transport Act for regularly failing to maintain buses properly.

Deputy traffic commissioner Mark Hinchliffe expressed an interest near the end of the proceedings in curtailing the firm's standard international licence that authorises the use of up to 350 vehicles.

But Mr Hinchliffe was presented with evidence during the hearing that showed that the company, based at premises in Upper Sheffield Road, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, needs 291 buses available to maintain public transport services across the region at existing levels.

The case was, therefore, adjourned to allow Mr Hinchliffe more time to consider a potential verdict and weigh up any possible consequences for people who travel on the company's routes throughout South and West Yorkshire.

Earlier Mr Hinchliffe had been told vehicle examiners made spot checks on single and double deckers at Barnsley Bus Station on January 16 and February 27 after concerns were raised about poor maintenance standards.

Vehicle examiner Paul Vardy said a walk down the central passenger aisle of a single-decker bus during the January inspection showed the engine trap door located near the back row seats was insecure and posed a possible danger to the public.

However, Mr Vardy added it was the discovery of an incorrectly fitted replacement seat cushion in the upper saloon of a double-decker during the February inspection that caused most concern.

The cushion had been fixed to a metal sheet to prevent it slipping backwards and forwards but it moved rapidly from side to



Yorkshire Traction's standard international licence authorises the use of up to 350 vehicles

side because it was too narrow to fit into the seat unit properly.

"There was a large gap between the cushion and the one on the seat next to it and the guillotine action of the replacement cushion moving from side to side could have put lives in danger had somebody got their fingers or hands trapped," Mr Vardy said.

"The company conceded that a running repair to a damaged seat should not have been done like that and further work was quickly carried out to put it right."

Nevertheless, even though swift action was taken to remedy the problem, examiners decided to take a closer look at Yorkshire Traction's maintenance procedures after realising staff at the company had accrued 41 prohibition notices in total since last appearing at a public inquiry in August 2003.

Five separate inspections were subsequently carried out at short notice at Yorkshire Traction's depots in Barnsley (March 10, 2004), Rotherham (March 10), Doncaster (March 16), Shafton (March 17) and Huddersfield (March 19).

Vehicle examiners Keith Craven and Ron Utley helped complete the assessments and both gave evidence at the hearing but it was Mr Vardy who explained how the inspections gave a fair reflection of the actual condition of the vehicles examined.

"We gave them two to three hours notice before each site visit and vehicles were given to us at random by the operator with little preparation," Mr Vardy said.

"Vehicles were also picked out as they

came in off the road. Prohibition notices were issued but we found all the maintenance systems were in place and staffing levels were adequate."

Eight immediate, 14 delayed and 11 advisory prohibition notices were issued after 42 buses were inspected in total at the five depots. Faults ranging from engine oil leaks, worn shock absorbers and defective brake lights were discovered.

Vehicles at the Huddersfield depot were also found to have not been inspected by mechanics for periods of up to 12 weeks despite a requirement to conduct such work every three weeks.

A later spot check at Barnsley Bus Station on May 5 also found the emergency exit handle was missing from an upper saloon window in a double-decker bus that had recently been involved in an accident.

Transport solicitor Stephen Kirkbright, acting in Yorkshire Traction's defence, did not dispute any of the findings and instead focused on how the company's good reputation was being damaged by appalling levels of vandalism committed by school children on older buses.

Testimony was heard from Yorkshire Traction fleet engineer David Fields, rolling stock inspector Philip Stanger and engineering director Norman Cook showed maintenance procedures are comprehensive and actively enforced.

Problems at Huddersfield relating to buses not being inspected in accordance with maintenance schedules were blamed by the executives on a former depot manager who falsified documents to show work

Other Traffic Area Decisions

WEST MIDLAND

BIRMINGHAM, July 7, 2004

Iftakhar Ahmed t/a AA Travel, Worcester

● Action: That the operator's licence application is granted with immediate effect.

BIRMINGHAM, July 7, 2004

Longmynd Travel Ltd, director(s): Valerie May

Sheppard-Evans, David Mark Sheppard, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

● Action: That no findings are made against the company or Mr Sheppard and, therefore, no action is to be taken against the licence.

WESTERN

Bristol, July 8 2004

John Harry Thomas Gange t/a Gange Taxis &

Minicoaches, Cowes, Isle of Wight

● Action: Deputy Traffic Commissioner Alan Bourlet decided the O-licence will be curtailed from five vehicles to three vehicles from 2359hrs on Monday August 9 to 2359HRS on Thursday September 9 2004.

A fleet inspection is to be carried out by VOSA examiners within the next six months.

PLYMOUTH, July 13 2004

First Devon & Cornwall Ltd, Plymouth

● Action: The traffic commissioner will make a written decision in approximately 28 days.

SCOTTISH

EDINBURGH, July 15, 2004

Robert Campbell t/a Campbells Coaches, East Lothian

● Action: PSV S17 - condition attached to reduce the number of vehicles under the licence at any one

time to three with immediate effect. No increase for at least nine months.

Such a condition would be imposed on any licence granted in the legal entity of Mr and Mrs Campbell.

NORTH WESTERN

LANCASHIRE, July 05, 2004

Catch-Me-Bus.Com Ltd t/a Catch-Me-Bus.Com Ltd, Blackburn

● Action: S17 and Schedule 3, licence revoked with immediate effect, company lost good repute and professional competence.

Transport manager has lost good repute.

MERSEYSIDE, July 19, 2004

City of Preston Transport Ltd, Preston

● Action: Application withdrawn - PI cancelled

had been done when it had not actually taken place.

The manager was sacked when supervisors found out what he was doing and evidence presented at the hearing showed that, since then, there had been no further problems at the Huddersfield depot.

Mr Kirkbright then called upon the Freight Transport Association's (FTA) Graham Collins to present statistics compiled during an independent investigation that proved Yorkshire Traction's maintenance record is not as bad as it might seem.

Mr Collins said staff at the FTA looked at 33 vehicles between March 1 and April 31 and an analysis of their findings showed all the appropriate maintenance systems were in place but the efforts were being hampered by a failure to spot faults during inspections.

"When looking at this type of information it is clear there is some room for improvement but it is necessary to keep it in perspective," Mr Collins said.

"The gap between Yorkshire Traction's performance and the sector average is close but not perhaps as close as it should be.

"They need to focus their efforts on improving the overall standard of their engineering by concentrating on the inspection side rather than maintenance and driver-defect reporting systems."

A short debate followed between Mr Collins and Deputy Traffic Commissioner Mr Hinchliffe about whether having a smaller fleet might make the company's maintenance record better and it was agreed such a change could make a difference.

But Yorkshire Traction managing director Frank Carter, who was the last to give evidence, told the hearing any cuts to the fleet

'We are seriously considering whether to do school work in the future'

could have devastating consequences for the viability of his business.

The firm needs 224 buses to maintain services at their existing levels and 19 vehicles for National Express work plus spares, making a total of 291, he said.

And he made it clear that most of the maintenance failures had occurred on buses assigned to school routes that were about 20 years old.

"The reason why we have so many older buses still in service is done to the purchasing strategy employed by the publicly-owned

company in the 1980s," Mr Carter said.

"We still have 40 such vehicles still in service and, while these are being gradually phased out, it is not possible for a private company to replace them all in one year.

"We are due to take delivery of 20 new buses and 12 mid-life vehicles next year that will reduce the average age of our fleet to nine years - significantly better than many other large companies.

"But we are seriously considering whether to do school work in the future and, if we do, there is no justification for using new buses due to the behaviour of some children.

"Ripping, slashing and burning of seats on our older buses is extremely common and the general level of vandalism caused by children is going to be investigated by the passenger transport executives."

● Last year (CBW, September 11) Yorkshire Traction faced a public inquiry in which vandalism by pupils was said to be a major problem for the company when it appeared before North Western Deputy Traffic Commissioner Elizabeth Perrett because of concern over its maintenance standards. In taking no action against the company other than to issue a formal warning, the deputy commissioner said that future problems might result in a conclusion that the company had grown too big for the staff it has.

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Have your say

Send your letters to: The Editor, *CBW*, Emap Active, Bretton Court, Bretton, Peterborough PE3 8DZ or e-mail mark.williams@emap.com

Coach driver drinking must be stopped

From: Robert Easton
Director, AW Easton's Coaches Ltd

ON Friday last we had four coaches to Newmarket Races and, as we were very busy, I had to drive one myself.

These were for an evening race meeting plus entertainment. As I have not been to a race meeting for many years I thought it would be a good opportunity for a small flutter. We went into the family enclosure after showing our work tickets to confirm we were coach drivers - although I do not think this was actually necessary as some people were just going up to the stewards and saying they were

coach drivers and they were letting them in - but what I witnessed astounded me. Coach drivers, many with their company name on their shirt pocket (no jackets as it was a very warm evening) were walking around drinking pints of beer. This I found totally unacceptable and think should be stopped. Even some members of the general public who we were talking to noticed what was going on and commented on it. I think this should be brought to the attention of the coach company owners through your magazine. PS, I did end up £5 in pocket on the night - also a very good evening was had by all.

LETTER OF THE WEEK WINS A CORGI CLASSICS MODEL BUS

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I had a fantastic time in the industry

From: Bernard Jefford
Nottingham

I WAS saddened to read that yet another person has left the industry (*CBW*, July 22).

Having just retired from this exciting industry and served in a variety of positions with various companies, I am still receiving job offers and yet I do not have any of the qualifications that the writer had.

My philosophy has always been to 'go the extra mile' and that does not mean in the driving sense. It means:

- As a conductor making sure that in the peak period all seats were fully occupied. My regular passengers knew that, if I said "sorry, full up", the bus was full.

- As a driver I would wait for runners whether or not I worked with a conductor. I once called into Luton Bus Station when returning empty from the local airport on a peak Saturday evening to see if there were any overloads in the Nottingham direction. The local National Express inspector told me his prayers had been answered.

- As a bus station inspector, making myself known and that the

buck stopped with me as far as complaints were concerned and seeking out these passengers to let them know their problem had been dealt with, encouraged these people to approach me again. Everything was reported and the station DTS had a complete picture of the day's operation.

- As a mobile revenue protection inspector seeking out hotspot problems which gave the company cause for concern, constantly changing my shifts so only managers knew when I was working.

I was pleased to receive many commendations for my attentive

attitude to the company and this only spurred me on to greater objectives, ie, journey running times off peak, paid meal break observations. May I stress that, despite some criticism from my own ranks, I continued to push and look for problems in some out-of-the-way places when supervision was not expected and it paid off handsomely. My face did not fit nor did I play golf but I have had a fantastic time and finally bowed out in December 2003, being known as the busman who in Nottingham was the first one to call passengers 'customers'.

Summer heating not wanted on buses

From: Colin Richardson
e-mail letter

WHEN there is a hot spell of weather, passengers often have to travel in

uncomfortable and inhuman conditions. I am told by drivers that they have switched the heating off in the cab. However, in many cases this has not been done. I am further told the only way the heating can be turned

off is by a tap in the engine and only engineers can do this.

I draw this matter to the attention of all companies' chief executives, general managers and engineers for their prompt action to cope with the

hoped-for hot weather. This benefit will give all passengers a far more enjoyable ride and, additionally, much-needed revenue.

No doubt chassis and body-builders can assist in this matter.

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Questions & Answers

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Digital tacho concerns continue

Q Recently I read an anonymous article encouraging the industry to welcome the digital tachograph with open arms. What are the true arguments for and against digital tachographs?

A The digital tachograph was promoted by politicians across Europe as a way to stop what they perceived as the widespread and persistent abuse of the drivers' hours rules by transport operators. They believed that the analogue tachograph was too easy to abuse, and insisted upon setting an introduction date (subsequently set as August 5 2004) to force technology to produce a solution. However, practical difficulties in the drafting of the technical specification, the design of prototype units and type approving of them has forced the commission to recognise that its desired timescale was over optimistic and the mandatory introduction has been delayed by one year until August 5 2005.

Cost

As we see it, the most serious concern for the coach-operating industry is cost. Like all projects, the estimated cost for the digital tachograph was significantly under estimated. The commission expected more manufacturers to enter this market with resultant competition and lower unit costs for an electronic 'black box'. It is possible that the project would not have proceeded if the true costs had been known at the outset.

Security

The memory modules within the digital tachograph (one year) and the driver's card (28 days) are both volatile in that

Today, August 5, was the day set by the EC for the introduction of the digital tachograph. So what went wrong?

they can be over-written by later data. Therefore, if the stakes are high enough, unscrupulous people will find a way to circumnavigate the security features to gain a commercial advantage. Indeed, Cambridge University provided a research report which highlighted potential concerns which encouraged more robust security to be required by the specification. The banking industry with all its financial strength has not totally eradicated fraudulent use of smart cards.

Reliability

Proponents of the digital tachograph suggested that reliability would be improved because the units were electronic. However, the specification calls for an integral printer to provide on demand a printout of the drivers' activities. The result is that this (dot matrix) printer will be required to work in the harsh environment of the drivers' cab and thus has all the potential of becoming the Achilles heel of the system. A safer option would have been for all outputs to be electronic, with local interrogation by way of exception reporting to the display screen and major download of data for offsite analysis to read only media (eg, CD ROM).

Manual entries and training

Currently the driver uses a simple 3/4 mode switch to record the work activity and completes the centre field of the chart by hand - but still they get it wrong. The digital tachograph system uses up to 20 icons which the driver will need to learn to understand his printout. Furthermore, he will still have to make manual entries to describe his total work activity (eg, start and finish location). Certainly location (to a large degree) and perhaps other entries could have been done differently at minimal extra cost (and more securely) by satellite (GPS). So where's the benefit to the driver to reduce his input and help him stay

legal? The initial and re-training requirements to cope with the complexities of the new units are likely to be very costly and impact on prices.

Interpretation of data

This has to be the commission's greatest missed opportunity. Despite the commission's wishes to the contrary, the enforcement authority in each EU Member State could still apply a different interpretation of the drivers' hours rules. Indeed, the current proposal to change Regulation EC 3820/85 may well have been initiated by the expectation that the digital tachograph itself needed to analyse the data in the same way as a computer, to keep drivers 'legal'. The current regulation is so flexible with regard to exceptions and compensation that no programme has yet been written that can definitely identify every known breach of the rules. Therefore, the commission should have stipulated that a standard analysis programme be part of the associated technology and thus, if the digital tachograph unit did not send a recorded warning of an infringement to the driver, there would be no need to further interrogate the driver's work history.

Redeeming features

So what, if any, will be the digital tacho's redeeming features? Well, it's smaller and does not need to be located in the dashboard area. It is likely to be cab radio-shaped and to fit anywhere accessible for the driver to insert his card prior to driving. Its greatest benefit is likely to be as a management tool, given its ability to download lots of data at super-fast speed to enable the operator to analyse the driver's 'hours' history and to schedule his future work and rest accordingly. This, in theory at least, should prevent/reduce drivers' hours infringements and assist in maximising the driver's working and 'availability' times under the Working Time regulations, to the benefit of operators and drivers alike. However, only time will tell.

Digital tachograph: smaller and does not need to be located in the vehicle's dashboard area



Keeping on rolling

Steel wheelcover maker Automate has moved to a new site yet again. Martin Cole discovers the reasons for the company's success and continuing development

AUTOMATE Wheelcovers, now one of the largest suppliers in Europe, has completed its move to extensive new premises just half a mile from its previous location in Gomersal, West Yorkshire.

Since the business was established in 1980/81, it has moved twice to cater for expansion. Originally, it was located in Bleak Street, Gomersal, in a cramped warehouse, which served as office, stores and dispatch area. These restricted conditions served for almost ten years before the business finally outgrew the location and it moved into larger, far more convenient, premises just up the road.

At that time the new site provided accommodation for proprietor Stuart Smith and wife Linda and offered the option of a showroom-style frontage where products could be put on display.

Initially, wheelcovers had been manufactured in aluminium because it was easy to spin and form, but it was far too flimsy, distorted easily and tarnished quickly.

Stainless steel was very soon regarded as the preferred option but it requires specialist production methods to deliver a quality item

and there are few manufacturers capable of delivering top-class wheelcovers.

Automate has for 20 years been the main UK distributor for Italian specialist Ruspa and developed a close working relationship with the company, becoming heavily involved in the development of fixing and retaining systems that work effectively and prevent wheel cover loss.

Stuart Smith always said lost wheelcovers provided one of the saddest sights. He firmly believes in the adage "you only get one chance to make a first impression", that the coach is usually the first thing the customer will see. However, coaches and trucks occasionally lose their wheelcovers, which is both expensive as well as damaging to the overall appearance of the vehicle and adversely affects the company's image.

When Automate was launched it had intended becoming a key supplier to the motorhome market and had paid little regard to other sectors. Motor homes still account for a reasonable proportion of the business but it quickly became clear coach operators thought the Automate products were a very good way of enhancing the appearance of a



coach - whether they opted for full wheelcovers, simple nut rings and covers, or what is termed as the TIR covers.

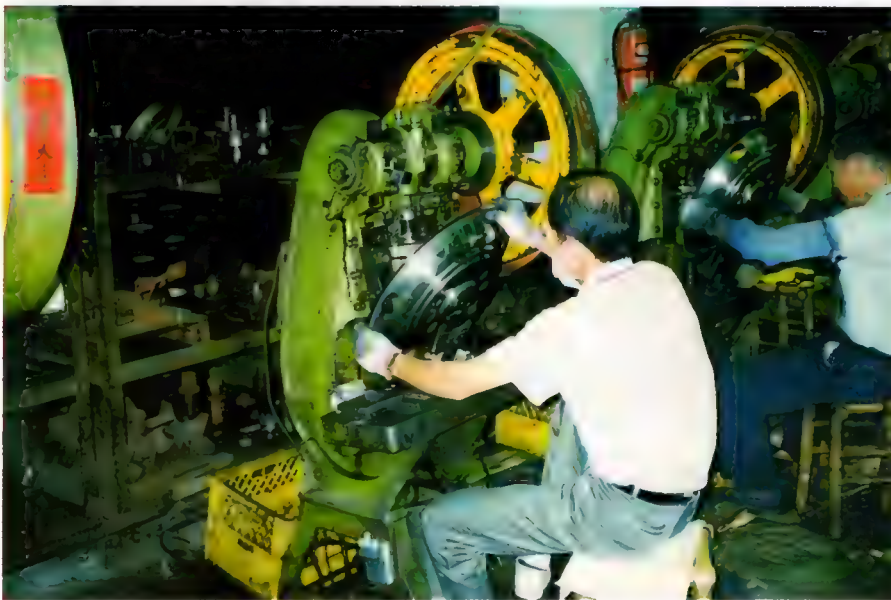
Studying the market in depth has led Stuart Smith to become an expert on wheel sizes and applications - familiar with the vagaries of each type and the requirements for fitting an attractive wheel cover that causes few problems for the operator or maintenance staff when checking tyre pressures or wheel nut security.

This knowledge was a key factor in driving towards a complete range of sizes to accommodate all wheel sizes from five to 24.5 in. However, Ruspa was reluctant to expand its range of production beyond its established sizes and so a long search was undertaken to source an additional supplier.

Having been involved with American motor homes and keeping an eye on heavily decorated American trucks, Mr Smith noted that the best-looking option for rear wheels was a wheel liner that followed the contour of the deep wheel well and covered the protruding centre of the axle.

Eventually he made contact with the largest producer of stainless steel wheel liners in the world - in Taiwan. Between Automate and the manufacturer, a number of designs were hatched and eventually the 'Euroliners' design was born. The range incorporated an attractive styling with all the practical experience gained over the years - ensuring easy fitment and wheel cover security. Once settled it was then crunch time and Automate had to make a decision on whether or not to go ahead.

The Taiwan factory required sufficient orders to justify a container load to cover the cost of tooling and production overheads. After a great deal of soul searching and ques-



Automate's wheelcovers are pressed and polished in Taiwan



Above: Automate's new showroom has a comprehensive display of covers

tioning his own confidence in the market, Stuart eventually agreed to find the money.

Work went ahead and, after two visits to the factory in Taiwan, was quickly completed and, with the initial batch of Euroliners on the high seas, it was a time of exceptional anxiety about the future. The situation was not aided when their arrival aroused great interest from the market but little in the way of concrete orders.

However, fears were eventually overcome and gradually sales began to build and have now stabilized, with Euroliners firmly established as the preferred choice of operators, dealers and manufacturers.

‘As the time drew near to where you have to put up or shut up, it was a nerve-racking time’

Even now, Stuart looks back on those times with some wonder. He said: “I don’t mind admitting that, when I signed up for that first consignment, I was very worried. Building up to it I was full of confidence and sure it was the right thing to do but, as the time drew near to where you have to put up or shut up, it was a nerve-racking time. Even six months after we’d taken delivery of the consignment I was convinced it had all been a horrible mistake, yet now, with 34 sets in the range and 17 new ideas in everyday use, I can look back

and say it was the best thing I ever did.”

Less than seven years after Euroliners became the most popular item on the market, Automate was being forced to look for even larger premises. Fortunately an old mill property became vacant a little further down the road at California Mills. It was quickly purchased and converted with the front part of the building used as showroom, offices and warehouse, while the rear of the property, still surplus to immediate requirements, has been turned into an MOT preparation and testing workshop and let to another business.

Coinciding with this latest move, Automate has now become a limited company.

Part of the wheel liner design includes a stainless steel axle cap that is difficult to manufacture economically in bulk. The main problem is in the shipping because the depth of the item means placing one on top of another takes up a lot of space in a container and it is impractical to load efficiently. It means the company would be paying a lot of money to ship fresh air half way around the globe.

For that reason the axle caps are produced in the UK and assembled at a small workstation in the warehouse. The procedure is somewhat tedious and a way of mass-producing them efficiently is being looked into. The present solution seems to be in designing the axle caps as left and right-handed units with one side being slightly larger than the other. Stuart believes a 2mm diameter size difference would be virtually indistinguishable to the eye but would allow the pair to be nested and therefore reduce the space required for packaging and shipping.

Stuart’s daughter, Pepa, has recently joined the company to get grounding in the basic day-to-day running. Shortly she is to go to Taiwan and



Above: Automate's new TIR cover

Below: Double-bracket on TIR covers



Above: Small workstation for producing axle caps

will work for the agent used by Automate and will get first-hand experience of global import and export. At the same time she will actively source new products to add to the extensive range already available.

What of the future? September sees the launch of a new TIR Quattro with double brackets. It embodies traditional styling brought to life with new technology. Stuart says the simple addition of a double bracket brings the TIR right up to date.

Automate has always carried sidelines to its core product including magazine nets and ashtrays for coach seats and wood-effect vinyl dashboard trims etc. Accessories to go with wheelcovers - such as push-fit chrome nut caps. Stainless steel valve stem extensions, braided hoses and tyre pressure gauges can all be sourced from the company.

So far Stuart has resisted all approaches from parties interested in acquiring the business but he is also extremely attracted to a life in Cape Town, South Africa and there is also a strong temptation to sell up and go. Yet with the reward of having established Euroliner as a leading European brand name, and with lots of new product and ideas, Stuart can still see new opportunities in the UK and Europe and it is very likely he will want to continue driving the business forward. **CBW**

At this year's forthcoming IAA exhibition, MAN will be highlighting the extension of its Lion branding to cover the whole range, not just coach products. Martin Cole drove some of the vehicles in Germany last week



The growing pride

AMONG A HOST of announcements and developments to be highlighted by MAN at this year's IAA commercial vehicles exhibition in Hanover will be the extension of its Lion branding to cover the whole range - not just its coach products.

The name was initially adopted with the introduction of the Lion's Star and Lion's Coach and MAN believes the move will strengthen its brand identity. Running in tandem with this change is a revision of model designations also designed to make model identification much easier. Other new developments include the addition of a right-hand-drive Neoplan Tourliner in 2005 which will come to the UK market, a new city bus, a new inter-urban coach, a dual-purpose commuter coach with low entry, enhanced back-up and support, a unified electronics platform and the implementation of ESP electronic stability programmes.

Turning the corner

Chief executive of MAN, Hakan Samuelsson, said the company had emerged from three difficult years and, following a painful restructuring and considerable investment in its production plants, had experienced 8% growth. Coach and bus sales were up by 7.9%, overall turnover had risen by 12.4% and its order book swollen by 20.9%. Truck sales rose by 9.5% but the company had been forced to shed 2.3% of its workforce to achieve profitability.

Mr Samuelsson said MAN's target was to achieve 18% of the European market. MAN was strong in Germany, Austria and Spain but was keen to develop further growth, particularly in France and Italy. He believed there

was significant potential in Russia and that China presented an "interesting" challenge.

Lion's Regio

Designed to compete effectively in the inter-urban coach market for scheduled operation, Lion's Regio spearheads the start of a completely redeveloped range. It comes in two lengths and with different power ratings - bearing a close resemblance to the Lion's Coach range.

Lion's Regio makes use of new materials and has a newly developed cockpit. Other new technical features complement tried and tested components such as the current coach running gear and rear-mounted Euro 3 six-cylinder engines to ensure reliability. They have 310, 360 or 410 bhp ratings.

The body has a uniform width of 2.55m resulting in a spacious aisle providing good access to seats and front and centre doors. The front entrance and driver's space have been extended and the increased wheelbase allows greater passenger and luggage space - up to 6.3 cubic metres. The two-axle 12.2m version seats up to 55 while the three-axle vehicle can carry up to 63 passengers.

Floor height of 860mm provides internal headroom of 2.21m at the front - reducing to 1.76m at the rear. High specification coach seating, kitchen and toilet can be fitted as an option.

Full-length luggage racks are deep and practical and finished in colour-coordinated ABS for easy cleaning and maintenance. They carry ducting for the air conditioning and for heat distribution - although the prime heating source is via convection skirting radiators. Stanchions and handrails throughout the

saloon incorporate indirect lighting units that shine on to the roof and create an even lighting effect. The centre-door step well is prepared to accept a wheelchair boarding lift.

EBS (Electronic Braking System) is common to the range and regulates the braking process - preventing wheel lock and reducing braking distance. Ventilated disc brakes are fitted on all axles and the new ESP can be fitted as an option on all inter-urban models. A new feature in the programme is the integrated roll-back lock which makes driving off uphill even simpler.

TEPS electronic programme

Lion's Regio is the first range to be fitted with a redeveloped electronic structure that will be common throughout the NEOMAN Bus Group. TEPS (Twin Electric Platform System) means consistent grouping of all electronic functions from running gear and body on separate switchboards. The physical interface of both CAN Bus circuits is located in the nose cupboard on the dashboard and facilitates a diagnostics point, away from dirt and moisture. Technicians can use the MAN-Cats diagnosis computer to interrogate the error memory of the vehicle management computer.

Lion's City

Lion's City represents a completely revised urban bus range for NEOMAN Bus GmbH with lengths of 12m two-axle, 15m three-axle or 18m articulated. Operators can choose between horizontal or vertical engine configuration.

MAN has tried to distance Lion's City from standard scheduled-service buses through stylish design incorporating full-height win-



of MAN

dows and a body with curved sides and rounded edges. It has a neatly laid-out, attractive interior with a spacious feel - exaggerated by cantilever seating and an ergonomically designed interior - which introduces a weight saving of 50kg.

The display vehicle was equipped with MAN's horizontally installed six-cylinder D 0836, seven-litre engine, rated at 280bhp. This produces torque of 1,100 Nm between 1,400 - 1,700rpm. MAN says the Common-Rail injection system improves efficiency and delivers lower emissions while also being quieter. It is also available with SuperWide (Super Single) tyres on the rear axle.

A four-speed automatic Voith DIWA.5 gearbox is being used in series production for the first time. This also saves weight because of its integrated oil circuit system. The new Voith is additionally capable of compliance with new generation telematics for controlling and recording operating data. Fourth gear is designed as an overdrive and contributes to lower fuel consumption. New features mean the filter exchange can be done without a complete oil change. The new steering electronics E 300 can automatically recognise topographic features and axle transmission ratio - adapting gearchange strategies accordingly. The new six-speed automatic gearbox from ZF is optionally available.

LPG versions of Lion's City for even lower emissions will also be available.

Lion's City T low-entry bus

'T' stands for 'Twin' but this term is more relevant to us as 'dual purpose'. To some extent it mimics the UK's SLF design, with a lowfloor front section extending back beyond the centre doors.

For MAN it provides a low-cost 12m lowfloor service bus with engine options of 220 or 280bhp or an inter-urban version, Lion's City TU, with a

Lion's City - brand new offering for official launch at the IAA exhibition in September

280bhp engine and six-speed manual gearbox instead of the Voith or ZF automatic options.

Its layout allows space for just 36 seats on two-door versions and this drops to 32 if a third rear entrance is specified. The model will appeal more specifically to German operators who are eligible for subsidies on inter-urban service vehicles. The laws now insist on these vehicles having lowfloor easy access - but in practice operators found passengers on longer journeys did not enjoy travelling on lowfloor buses because they couldn't see much out of the windows. The raised rear section is popular, improves the view for passengers and the vehicle qualifies for subsidy.

ESP Electronic Stability Package

ESP has been made available on all coaches and inter-urban vehicles across the NEOMAN range - encompassing Neoplan Starliner, Skyliner and Tourliner models. The system comprises electronic drive dynamics regulation through close monitoring of the engine management system and braking system - together with the sub-systems EBS 2 (electronic brake system), ABS (anti-blocking system) and ASR (anti-slip regulation). The system senses when the vehicle dynamics are approaching their physical limit and can apply braking pressure to individual wheels. The new system also incorporates brake assistants for early recognition of emergency braking and a roll-back block to make uphill starts easier.

Essentially, ESP comes into its own when its sensors detect the vehicle is in danger of skidding or rolling over. By taking control of the engine management and the braking system ESP keeps the vehicle under control.

LGS Lane Guard System

LGS has been developed to support the driver when he/she becomes inattentive or distracted. An example is when the vehicle leaves the lane on motorways without any recognisable intention - in which case a warning is issued.

LGS permanently registers the course of the lane in front of the vehicle using a digital video camera mounted behind the windscreen. The image is monitored electronically - taking note of lane markings. Should the vehicle leave the prescribed lane without activating the indicator, the warning is transmitted via the seat pads - causing no alert to passengers.

ACC Adaptive Cruise Control

Another new development in safety is Active Cruise Control. MAN says it is possible to use the ACC even in heavy traffic conditions as the system adapts its own driving speed to the traffic flow and helps the driver maintain safe distances.

It provides normal cruise control functions with the ability to adapt the vehicle's speed to that of a vehicle in front - keeping a safe distance. MAN says it has a positive effect on driver stress reduction.

ACC employs a high-frequency radar system mounted in the lower part of the air dam. It records vehicles driving ahead in the same lane. The sensor, with an integrated transmitter and receiver unit in the air dam, also emits radar waves. These are reflected at the rear of the vehicle

ahead and picked up again by the sensor - determining the distance and speed of the vehicle ahead.

Improved support

The IAA exhibition will see the launch of 'Mobile24', which is designed to provide unrestricted mobility across Europe.

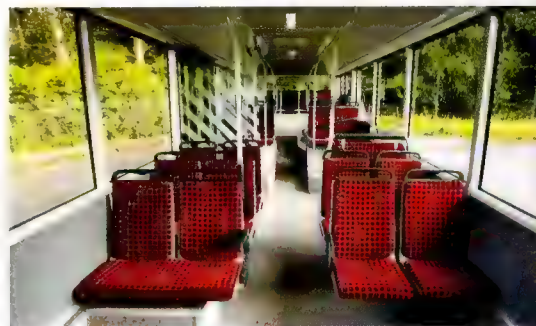
Mobile24 coach and bus customers have the advantages of non-cash payments for MAN services using either the MAN RepairCard or ServiceCard. It can also be used for purchasing fuel or paying motorway tolls.

Assistance is available from the MAN and Neoplan Service Centre in Munich using one telephone number - +49(0)180 53535333. Trained staff are available to speak to callers in six languages: these languages can be dialled direct using different final digits: 1 English; 2 French; 3 German; 4 Spanish; 5 Italian; and 6 Dutch.

Mobile24 Service Centre is available round the clock, 365 days per year and is manned by trained members of staff who pass on the orders to qualified fitters close to the breakdown location. Close communication between the Service Centre, fitters and the customer ensure fast and reliable parts supply. The new service package is rounded off by a transparent and comprehensible invoicing system.

NEOMAN has also thrown open its training centres, Neoplan Akademie eV, and the MAN training centres in Munich, Salzgitte and Berlin, which provide technical training courses covering all aspects of buses and trucks. Courses enable drivers to carry out smaller servicing and repair jobs on the vehicles themselves. Initially designed for technical staff, driver training is now available and last year almost 2,400 bus and truck drivers took advantage of the system. In the first half of 2004 more than 1,100 drivers have been trained.

Neoplan Akademie eV runs courses in safety and economical driving for bus drivers, first-aid



Stylish and spacious - Lion's City interior



Lion's City T - low entry bus

courses, training in legal matters and marketing in addition to maintenance and care of vehicles. Last year the 'Akademie' trained almost 1,200 coach and bus drivers, and 1,400 drivers have already attended training courses this year. The main emphasis was on safety. These figures show operators are attaching more and more importance to competent and trained drivers.

Driving impressions

Lion's City is a very attractive citybus with a stylish, yet homely shape thanks to its rounded corners and curved body sides. The interior seems, at first, typically sparse in terms of seats like most continental designs, but it does manage 36 despite a centre entrance and space for a wheelchair.

Full height windows help create a very light saloon and this is accentuated by the use of attractive ABS mouldings lining the roof and as general trim material.

The driver's cockpit makes use of a new instrument binnacle containing clear dials and gauges from the TGA truck. The steering column is fully adjustable and so is the seat - making it easy to create a suitable driving position. Mirrors and nicely positioned to give a good view and the A pillars don't intrude much on the line of sight.

The demonstration vehicle was fitted with a 286bhp engine and a Voith four-speed automatic with retarder functions tied into the footbrake. The engine encapsulation was so good it was difficult to hear it and from the driver's seat - the air conditioning blower was much louder than any noise from the rear.

Pulling away from a standstill was smooth but not as instant as might be expected. This didn't prove to be a problem once acclimatised to and the progress through the gears, with slow, steady changes, could best be described as sedate.

Ride quality on the Lion's City was excellent and it handled very well around the driving test course, which involved segments of rural main roads, suburban roads and town centre driving. Braking could be achieved very smoothly, with the retarder taking on most of the requirement unless a more sudden stop was called for. Steering was light and very positive at low speed but tended to become a little more vague at higher speeds - especially where there were changes in surface camber - but nothing to cause any worry. The overall driving experience was very pleasant.

Lion's Regio

MAN members of staff were all highly delighted with the new Regio as they believe it will enable them to be highly competitive in the inter-urban coach market. It is a no-frills model but very nicely appointed with a pleasant interior that is well finished and practical.

The demonstration model was equipped with a ZF six-speed manual gearbox and retarder functions were available on the foot brake. Air conditioning was the only real extra on the Regio and it ensured the passenger environment remained comfortable.

Ride quality was exceptionally good for a

vehicle in this class, aided by the adoption of independent front suspension. Steering and handling were impeccable and the gear changes light and precise - aided by an easily operated clutch. Changing down the gears proved a fairly simple task but sometimes was accompanied by an audible buzzer. This sounds if the clutch pedal is not fully depressed as the engine management system senses the drive is not fully disengaged. As the gears always selected positively without any sign of protest - even when the buzzer sounded - it may be that the setting is a little too sensitive but, once the driver is aware of why the buzzer is sounding it is a very simple matter to adjust driving habits to ensure the pedal is actually pushed right to the floor.

Noise levels in the saloon were not too bad - acceptable for a vehicle of this nature, but it was pointed out that MAN engineers had only just finished detailed mechanical testing on the model and sound insulation was next on the list to be addressed.

From the driver's seat, vision was excellent and the adjustable steering column ensured a comfortable position could be achieved and there was a good view of all the instruments. The binnacle and instruments were almost identical to those installed in the Lion's City.

The 310bhp engine provided plenty of power for brisk acceleration and the spread of torque meant it was responsive in higher gears - reducing the need for constant gear changes.

MAN indicated the Regio could come to the UK if demand is sufficient and, although it would prove an interesting addition to the range, it could be seen as conflicting with existing products.

Tourliner

Neoplan's Tourliner was first seen at the IAA two years ago and described as 'the same as a Euroliner - but with different front and rear styling'.

Euroliner has proved very successful in the UK and it is difficult to see whether Tourliner would stand alongside it or replace it.

One advantage to the Tourliner is its availability in different lengths and on show was a standard 12m model alongside a 13.8m tri-axle. It has a range of power options from 310bhp, 360bhp or 410bhp and a wide choice of transmission from six or eight-speed manual to fully automatic or AS-Tronic.

Choice of demonstrator was limited to a 13.8m tri-axle fitted with an eight-speed manual gearbox.

Noise levels in the Tourliner were very low and the engine was almost inaudible. Most of the sound came from the transmission and transmitted road noise. It was quietest in the centre of the saloon.

An attractively styled driver's area also proved very comfortable, with all the essential switches and controls close to hand. Vision was excellent and the mirrors nicely set up, too. The additional length caused no real problems around the test course, with just a couple of junctions requiring a little extra care to avoid kerbing the trailing axle.

Driven without a load of passengers, the

gear changes can be minimised by starting off in second and missing out alternate ratios. MAN said it was quite acceptable to use second, fourth, sixth and eighth - and to come down in the reverse order. An audible warning sounds if the driver has not depressed the clutch pedal fully when down-shifting.

Changes were even slicker than the six-speed box on the Regio and, once the knack of sequencing the gears has been mastered, it becomes a pleasure to drive.

With 360bhp on tap the Tourliner was brisk and responsive with all the good handling characteristics that have made Euroliner a top seller in the UK.



Neoplan Tourliner 13.8m goes RHD from 2005



Tourliner interior is spacious and practical



Driving position is very comfortable



Lion's Regio - the new inter-urban coach

What's new

Matching the person to the job

WITH 25 year's experience in the PSV industry, Graham Archer says he's constantly come across drivers looking for work, or a change of direction.

He says that, because of the network of contacts in the industry, drivers often asked if he knew of companies looking for personnel. As a favour he would point them in the right direction, if he knew of anything. When companies then started contacting him asking the same question, he realised that the industry had a problem that maybe he could solve.

So four years ago he gave up his full-time job with a top coach operator to go freelance. He soon became aware of the shortcomings in the industry, the biggest of which was finding the right staff for the job. He often found 'good drivers' in bad companies, 'bad drivers' in 'good companies' and busmen trying to do coach work, leading to dissatisfaction, high turnover, and frustrated drivers and managers.

Graham says he has spent the last 18 months looking at drivers and companies to see exactly what they require. Where possible, he undertakes a client company's needs analysis to an understanding of culture, environment, schedules and geographic operation.

Qualified consultants conduct checks on drivers' licences, passports, cash-handling skills, vehicle experience and drivers' regulations knowledge during an in-depth interview procedure. Two work references are obtained. Security clearance for specialist work, or to a client's specifications, can also be undertaken. Training is given in any area that needs to be brought up to standard. Graham says his aim is to provide a perfect match for driver and client. The long-term objective of Coachdrive is to establish a driving school, thereby offering clients a complete hassle-free package.

Graham can be contacted on 01291 620846.



Coatings website

HMG has launched a new website to promote its Transport Coatings.

Widely used by UK coach, bus and minibus manufacturers/converters, www.hmgpaint.com can be visited by users and specifiers, who can now to find core product information and print off pdf-based leaflets or just consult the data online. The same information is also available on a CD-ROM for all HMG distributors and direct sales personnel to assist customers by guiding them through the range.

HMG recently equipped distributors with a CM2004 formulation retrieval system offering 70,000 colour and paint combinations. Customers can choose economy or premium products, fast or slow-drying formulations, long wet edges, coloured undercoats, primers and compliant coatings.

VFS launches Keyman cover

VOLVO FINANCIAL Services has launched Keyman insurance to provide life cover for up to four nominated key staff.

The company claims workplace sickness cost businesses £11.6 billion and it has devised Keyman and Keyman Plus as a means of protecting employers against potential loss of earnings. They offer up to £100,000 should an employee die or can provide disability payments up to £1,500 per month.

Keyman covers up to four nominated key staff whose death could have a major impact on a company committed to making repayments on business loans or leasing contracts.

Keyman Plus adds to this life cover with provision for absence due to sickness, accident or disability. Both policies are underwritten by Pinnacle Insurance plc.

For details contact Volvo Financial Services on 01926 498888.

Wear indicators

FERODO has introduced a wear indicator kit (FW1246) specifically for Mercedes-Benz Sprinter and Vito models.

It also applies to the Volkswagen LT28. The system means drivers can expect an OE quality prompt when their brakes are in need of attention.

Details are available from Ferodo distributors or on the Federal-Mogul website www.federal-mogul.com

Headlight bulbs 'give double the life and light' claims Osram

BULB maker Osram has developed a range of high-performance 24-volt headlight bulbs.

Osram Truckstar headlight bulbs are claimed by the manufacturer to give virtually double the life and double the light on the road.

Longer life means less downtime; more light results in less driver fatigue, says Osram.

The bulbs are available in H1, H3, and H7 to ECE standards.



Fleet upgrades

Van Hool duo delivers

Arriva Bus and Coach

RUNCORN operator Selwyns says two recently delivered Van Hool SB4000s are performing well for the company.

The delivery continues the operator's policy of specifying Van Hool vehicles and, says owner Selwyn Jones, "they're spot on - passengers are really pleased with them - especially the seats. Drivers like them, too, because the handling is superb."

Selwyns fleet comprises 75 vehicles - 40 of which are Van Hools - and the new coaches will be used for private-hire work.

They are fitted with wider seats than normal for extra comfort, air-conditioning, centre sunken toilets, fridge and water



boilers. A DVD/CD player is fitted for entertainment.

Working across the UK and Europe, they take Selwyn's coach investment to £2 million this

year and a further £1 million is expected to be spent during the rest of the year.

In September, another Van Hool arrives for National Express

work, taking the fleet to 26 dedicated vehicles. In December, another three will arrive, completing the company's 2004 investment programme.

Tilley's upgrades to EuroMidi

Irisbus

IRISBUS has delivered a new EuroMidi to Cornish operator Tilley's Coaches.

Bought as a fleet upgrade, the coach is fitted with Indcar Maxim II bodywork on an Iveco CC100 chassis. It's powered by a 210bhp engine driven through a six-speed ZF gearbox.

Tilley's new vehicle is fitted with 29 Kiel Avance recliners, interior luggage rack, carpets, curtains,

radio/CD and climate control.

Speaking to CBW, managing director Paul Tilley said: "It's a very big improvement - the new vehicle is making a big difference. It's very good - a very comfortable and powerful machine that's good drive. It's really raised the bar for this size of vehicle."

Tilley's is using the EuroMidi on a variety of work, from school contracts to local hire work, in common with the rest of its fleet.



Wright's Eclipses the opposition

Wrightbus

WRIGHTBUS is celebrating more deliveries of its popular Eclipse model.

Scottish operator Hutchison of Overtown has acquired four Eclipse Urban single deckers based on Volvo's B7RLE chassis, taking its Wrightbus fleet to eight.

Says proprietor Stewart Anderson: "We bought our first Wrightbus vehicles in 2002 for busy services where we needed the capacity, durability and performance of a heavy-duty vehicle, and we were very impressed with them. They are well built and have first-class back-up through Wright's Customcare support."

The new buses are used on one of Hutchison's trunk routes, which runs from Motherwell to Carluke via Wishaw.

Meanwhile, Blazefield-owned Yorkshire Coastliner is taking delivery of four Eclipse Geminis on its long-distance services from Leeds to Bridlington, Scarborough and Whitby.

They feature high-backed moquette-trimmed Esteban Civic V3 Club seats and soft trim on the centre of the ceiling panels.

They are the company's first Wrightbus double deckers, though it operates an extensive fleet of single deckers - including the imminent delivery of Wright's Eclipse

Commuter model.

Blazefield managing director Stuart Wilde told CBW: "For the high-profile long-distance Yorkshire Coastliner services, these vehicles set new standards in terms of style and comfort."





First takes eight for NatEx work

Plaxton and Scania

FOUR Plaxton Panther B12Bs and four Scania Irizar Century coaches are being used by First Coaches for National Express work following recent delivery.

All vehicles are fitted with 49 reclining seats, air-conditioning and

rear floor-mounted toilet.

Destination equipment is said to be Disability Discrimination Act compliant but don't have wheelchair lifts.

Supplied direct through the manufacturers, all eight are being used on the 200 service, which links Bristol with Gatwick Airports.

Second Sprinter ordered

Mellor Coachcraft

EAST Surrey Rural Transport Partnership (ESRTP) says it is so impressed with a lowfloor Sprinter delivered by Mellor Coachcraft at the end of June that it's ordering a second.

ESRTP officer Marcus Dodé said:

"The vehicle is fantastic and we are very impressed with its versatility."

It can transport up to four wheelchair users and will operate around Leatherhead and Dorking.

Fargo PBs for 'mystery' contract

Scania Bus and Coach

FARGO Coaches of Braintree, Essex, is using a newly-delivered Irizar PB-bodied Scania coach for a major contract with an unspecified but important client.

Built on a 12.2m Scania K124EB 4x2 chassis, it seats 36 on half-leather seats. The usual air-conditioning, centre sunken toilet with continental door and centre-mounted drinks dispenser are fitted.

Unusually, Fargo has opted for a lounge area at the rear of the coach, which contains three drinks flasks, but no electrics. Seats are fitted with multi-channel entertainment systems.

Though the vehicle will spend

much of its time on its contract work, it will be available for other duties and private hire when not used by the main client.

Travel West Midlands, meanwhile, has taken 11 SLF Omnicity CN94 UB artics. They are powered by Scania's DC902 engine driving through a ZF automatic gearbox.



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Refurbishment Services

Refurbishment makes sound economic sense for so many coaches. They were designed for at least 20 years on the road but after 15 years, a great many are showing the signs of ageing which will drive down the hire rate and reduce 'usability'. The truth is, with a fresh lick of paint, new flooring, new carpeting and retrimmed seats - or even new seats - few customers would be able to tell the difference between a reworked vehicle and one a couple of years old. The important thing is to make the refurbishment count by addressing all the visible signs of ageing. Get rid of the faded curtains and get new headrest covers. Tidy up the driver's area, replacing the gearstick knob, that tatty radio and even switches - all cheap items that take minutes to fit. A retrim will help address the fact that times have changed - greys and browns are out, bright colours are in! Always consider changing livery on a refurb first - if you change your mind, it won't be too expensive a mistake. Try devising a 'white and vinyls' livery - cheap to repair and easy to sell on later. Finally, don't forget to smarten up the wheels with either new wheeltrims or even alloys.

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1994/95 M Reg, 25 bus seats (but will re-seat to 29), very good condition, choice of 2
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1995, N Reg Allison Auto, 27/29 seats, choice of 3, full MOT
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1994 L reg, 23 plus 10 standing, manual gearbox. Choice of 3
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AEC ROUTEMASTER (RML), D Reg, unfortunately fitted with a broken Cummins (C series) engine a few other bits and pieces missing..... Offers over **£3,750**

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fitted Alexander Royale bodies, large luggage area downstairs (can be returned to seating), air conditioning, wheelchair lift in front entrance, coach seats, upstairs, ZF 5 speed gearbox (capable of 60 mph), nice condition throughout



1994/5 L AND M REG VOLVO B6'S

ZF Gearboxes, Volvo engines, 40 seats (some coach seated), large choice. These buses are a good opportunity to buy modern buses at reasonable prices. £11,000 each, plus tyres and VAT



1989 G REG VOLVO D10M CITYBUSES

Voith 3 speed autos, 88 seaters, ideal school buses for the new term.



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1995 VOLVO B6

Plaxton Pointer bodies, 35 seater, test just expired



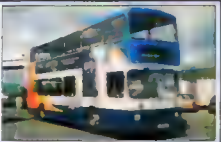
1982-86 MCW METROBUSES

71 seaters, Gardner 6LXB engines, Voith 3 speed gearboxes, new batch in with long tests



1986 LEYLAND OLYMPIAN

Gardner 6LXB engine, Voith automatic gearbox, Alexander body 76 seats, test 12/04



1962 AEC ROUTEMASTERS

Fitted recent Scania engine, good tests, these are almost the last of the standard length ones to become available, only a handful in stock so be quick?



1983 A REG LEYLAND OLYMPIAN

TL11/Hydracrylic, long wheelbase, 83 seaters with 2 doors, will upseat to 87



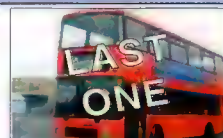
1992 J REG DENNIS DARTS

9 metres, Cummins/Allison, Plaxton Pointer bodies, 35 seaters, choice of 5



1995 VOLVO OLYMPIANS

fitted Alexander Royale bodies, 74 seats, only 3 of these superb machines available



1996 VOLVO OLYMPIANS

Northern Counties, Palatine body, dual and single door available, large choice. These young buses are a good buy and will last until DDA in 2017!!!



1993 K REG DENNIS DARTS

Wright bodies, 29 seats, Cummins/Allison, large choice



1986 C REG LEYLAND OLYMPIAN

Gardner 6LXB/Hydracrylic, ECW low height body, 77 seats, test 04/05



1996 DENNIS DART SLF'S

Plaxton Pointer bodies, 36 seats, single door, can upseat to 40



1984 A REG LEYLAND OLYMPIANS

Gardner 6LXB/Hydracrylic, 77 seats, ECW, low height bodies, new test



1992/3 K/L REG MERCEDES 709D'S

Manual, 25 seats, large choice. From £4,500 — Reduced to clear £3,000



1984 B REG TITAN

Single door, 74 seats, new test



1986/7 LEYLAND OLYMPIANS

Gardner/hydracrylic, ECW semi-low height bodies, 68 seats, long tests, some single door, 72 seaters also available, from £7000



1983 A REG LEYLAND TIGER

245 TL11, ZF 6 speed manual gearbox, Plaxton Paramount 3500 body, retractable belts throughout, test 05/05



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1996 Mercedes 814D 33 Seat Coach
1993 Mercedes 814D D/P 33 Seat
1993 Mercedes 814D Plaxton 33 Seat Coach Specification



Mercedes 814D 24 Seat Coach

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Mercedes 814D 1998 Dual Purpose Mellor, 29+6 Upgraded Seats, Choice
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Metrolider 1992 31+8 Standees, Auto, Telma, Above average

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Mercedes 814D 1998 Dual Purpose Mellor, 29+6 Upgraded Seats, Choice

Mercedes 811D 1991 Dual Purpose Europa, Turbo, 31+6 Semi High Coach Seats, Diapac Poles, Belts, Power Door

Mercedes 811D 1992 33+9 Seats

Mercedes 811D 1993 Plaxton 33+10 Seat, Auto

Mercedes 711D 1996 Coachbuilt Turbo, 25 High Spec, Coach, Power Door, Large Boot

Mercedes 709D 1996 15/3 Wheelchairs

Mercedes 709D 1993 29+7 Seats

Mercedes 709D 1995 Alexander 33+13 Seat, Auto

Mercedes 709D 1992 Plaxton 25+8 Seats, Auto

Mercedes 609D - 614D Coach Spec 1996 - 1998 24 Highback Seats, Belts, Power Door, Boot, all Tested

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Metrolider 1992 31+8 Standees, Auto, Telma, Above average

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